

THE
HISTORY
DE
POMPADOUR.



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THE
HISTORY
OF THE
MARCHIONESSES
DE
POMPADOUR.

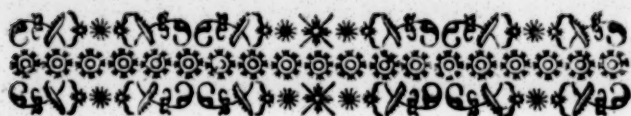
PART the SECOND.



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THE
HISTORY
OF
Madam de POMPADOUR.

PART the SECOND.



It Is now high time to bring
upon the scene an adventure
that , for its consequences ,
may be thought well to de-
serve special relation.

Part II.

B

Sometime after La Pompadour's infirmity had made her, in a certain sense, unapproachable to the King; his person, if not his heart, was considered as offering a vacancy. Amongst the fair sex there appeared, on the ranks, a number of candidates for his election of the happy one to fill it. Nor were there wanting amongst the courtiers, many who aspired to the honor of recommending an acceptable object. One of the competitors for this honorable service, a young nobleman produced to the King, as something worth remark; a portrait in miniature, procured for that purpose. It was that of a young girl beautiful beyond imagination. The falling in love with a picture is an incident worn so thread-bare, by its having been employed in thousands of novels and romances, that

there could be no excuse for giving this story so much the air of fiction, as to insinuate, that the king conceived any such passion, at the bare sight of this portrait. It will not appear so incredible, that he should just say, on considering the exquisiteness of the features, and the beauty of the complexion, that it could be nothing but a fancy-picture, for that he did not imagine that throughout all nature, there could be found the original of it. The nobleman assured him, that the girl whose likeness the portrait presented, was not only existing, but not hard to be had. This piqued the king's curiosity and, perhaps, his desire. He said he should not be sorry to see her, if it was but to satisfy himself whether he was mistaken or not. This

was hint enough to the nobleman, who immediately took care she should be brought to him.

The name of this young creature, who was scarce fourteen, was Murphy. She was born in France, but originally of irish extraction. The circumstances of her family must have been the lowest imaginable, since her sister actually served for a model at the Academy of Painters, and herself was designed to succeed her, in due time, in the same employ.

The king, at the sight of her, readily confessed, that her picture had done her less than justice. Her extream beauty, the freshness of a complexion, of which the comparison to roses would be a compliment to

the roses, her springing-bloom, her infant-graces, the air of sweet timidity natural to that age, and yet encreased by the over-powering sense of his presence, that innocence he presumed, and it is assured, that he found in her; all conspired to excite desires, of which there was no necessity for one of his rank to languish an instant for the gratification with one of hers.

He signified his pleasure, and she had been purposely brought to him, ready disposed, and having had her cue to conform to it. Then it was that he enjoyed a feast of pure nature; a feast too good for a king. Since there are so few in that station of life, but have their taste too vitiated by all the false refinements of courts, to have

even an idea of beauty's being exalted by simplicity. Unhappy enough never to be acquainted with truth in any thing, their whole life is one dull mistake of falsity for her, and in nothing more than in their choice of mistresses. In these how often do they take the grossest art and design for pure love, the nauseously affected airs acquired by education, for improved nature, and rich cloaths, jewels, paint, and all the non-naturals of dress for charms above those exquisite ones of naked nature ! We shall soon see that in the case of the young Murphy, this reflexion is not entirely an impertinent one.

She was now become the king's little mistress in form, the essential part of the ceremony, having been consummated upon

her. He had however no mind to produce her openly at his court, though, if beauty could give rank, she might have taken place of an empress. He was not unaware, nor perhaps above fearing the railery and sneers, to which an air scarce polished enough, the natural simplicity of her answers, and her childish strangeness and admiration of every thing new to her, would probably expose her. Neither could it indeed be expected, that she would not be even unpleasingly dazzled with so sudden a transition from the deepest obscurity to the strongest glare of pomp and magnificence. At courts there are many things to giddy the head, and but few to touch the heart. The privacy in which he proposed to keep his little novice, was rather a kindness to her. If he should think fit after-

wards to bring her into public life, she would by this means be broke into it by more tolerable degrees. As to La Pompadour, it could not well be thought, that, circumstanced as things were between them, he pushed his delicacy with regard to her, to the length of laying himself under any constraint of concealment from her: yet that has been said, and not without some grounds of reason.

The point was now to procure some snug retired place at hand, and convenient of access to the king, where she might be kept, under the care of proper persons. But a place accommodated to all these ends, was not easily to be found. His good friend, La Pompadour, helped him out in this perplexity, to which she added the

merit of not appearing to know that she was helping him.

As there was not a motion made, nor a step taken by the king, of which she had not the earliest intelligence by her spies, and persons of confidence near his person, she was soon apprized of this new fancy. She could not but be prepared for some such thing, and nothing was less fit to alarm her, than his thus picking out a raw unexperienced girl for his amusing himself with, in the way that she could not amuse him herself. She had at least nothing to apprehend from purely her head. So obvious was the fitness of this choice to calm any alarms of hers, at the king's engaging with another than herself, that it was by many believed to be of her own suggestion,

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and even management. But in this she was wronged. She had too much art and experience of things to contribute her ministry, to the provision of a mistress for him. The dilemma was plain. If he should like her enough to attach himself to her, she herself was supplanted in course. If, on the other hand, his mistress should come to disgust him, he would have to reproach her with the badness of her choice for him. Besides, that it would have shewn too gross, too indelicate in her, to be active in such a procurement. On the whole however, she took a far better part. It was that of winking hard, and feigning ignorance.

Proceeding on this plan, upon being acquainted with the king's embarrassment,

about getting a private convenient place for his new mistress ; she took the first opportunity of letting him know, that she was heartily tired of a small house, for which she had once had a great fondness. This was a solitary retreat that had been built for her, and was together with the gardens, taken out of that part of the park of Versailles, nearest to the road to St. Germain, which was another of the encroachments in her favor, that had given no small offence to the public. She intreated his majesty to relieve her from the care of it, and dispose of it as he pleased ; she did not at the same time drop him a single hint of her knowing that he wanted such a conveniency, nor for what he wanted it.

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If the offer publicly made in this manner, with such reserve of the reason of it, was not however a pre-concerted collusion between them, for the sake of saving appearances, the king could not but be sensible that La Pompadour must know what was no secret to the whole court. He gave her then, or affected to the world, to give her, double credit for her readiness to oblige him ; and for her discretion in the manner of it. Another less prepossessed would have seen nothing in this her procedure, but the artifice of it, and that not of the finest spun.

He accepted however this her so well-timed resignation of a place extreamly convenient for his actual-purpose. It was commonly called La Pompadour's Hermitage. Imagina-

tion can hardly figure to itself, a more delicious retreat. The most rural style was preserved through every part of it. The house itself was a small, unshowish building, much in the manner of a farm-house, and had a dairy on the back of it. Every thing for use or ornament of the inside expressed a sweet neatness and a noble simplicity. No expence had been spared to embellish it, that could take place without prejudice to propriety. Every thing breathed a country-air. The paintings, all of the most masterly hands, presented nothing but gay landshapes, pastoral scenery and country-revels on the Green. Little images of swains and nymphs were properly disposed, with here and there, for the contrast-sake, that of some hoary hermit. The apartments were furnished and hung with no-

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thing but with the finest and most lively colored Chintz that gave them a cool airy look.

The Gardens without being laid out in frigidly symmetrized compartments had nevertheless an imperceptibly regular variety. There was in one part of it a large bosquet of roses, with a statue of the God of Love finely executed, in the center of it. Here mirtles, there jessamins offered their embowering shade. The flower-plots though seemingly without order, had each its particular kind, unconfused with others ; jonquils, pinks, violets, tuberoses, all at a certain nearness, yielding, for their being thus unmixed, their respective odors, the more pure and the more distinctly mark-

ed; which yet at a little distance, blendingly united into one general fragrance.

On each side of the garden-door into the park, open arcades circularly disposed, and raised in stories over one another, formed two kind of amphitheatres of flowers covering their surface with a most beautiful variogation. Plats of verdure, a fine piece of water, enlivened by swans in front of the house, walks of ever-greens, all found a place, uncrowded, in this not very extensive spot. No beauty, in short, was omitted, that art could steal unobserved into Nature. Nothing, in truth, was unnatural in this retreat, except the owner of it La Pompadour herself, who, with a ridiculous and surfeiting affectation, used to come, in recess, here, in the style of a

shepherdes of Arcadia, and give herself the air of amusing herself with country-housewifery, and playing the dairy-maid, by way, forsooth, of unbending from the fatigues of a Court and of forgetting, for a while, her present greatness, as she long had done her primitive littleness.

To this retreat so far preferable, in point of true taste to the pompous palace of Versailles, where true pleasure is lost in a croud of false ones, or catches its death of cold in an uncomfortable vastness of apartments, was the young Murphy brought; a figure [and character much more congenial to the spirit of the place than the owner, who had just quitted it for the time. Here the king resorted to her, at his hours of conveniency or desire. Here under the shade

of privacy, adding yet a poignancy to enjoyment, he passed minutes, he might have justly called the most voluptuous of his life, if he had had the taste to set the just value on his happiness. But a long use of the feverish high diet of made sauces, *à la Pompadour*, had furred his palate and spoiled his relish for this plain, more wholesome, and infinitely better tasted dish. It is not that wit may not claim great consideration, even where youth and beauty may have declined, or not exist in a very superior degree. But then that must be on strict condition, that such wit should not be, as it most often is, mischievously or dangerously employed, and thus stand rather a reproach than a merit. Whilst so delicious a creature as the young Murphy needed no more of its seasoning, than would just defend her from insipidity.

For at her age, she could, properly speaking, only give the hope of wit, and that she did give, being remarkably sprightly, and quick of apprehension. Compare her then in imagination, with La Pompadour, and her whole system of faded attractions, and only the more forbidding for that rankness of artifice which obtained her the king's preference, and it will not be hard to pronounce on which of the two objects, the choice of a man of taste would fall. The exquisite beauty of this young creature, her florid bloom, her artless innocence, her native ingenuity ; all these points so captivating and endearing to a truly refined voluptuary, who would have even found an additional pleasure in trying to form and qualify her for more than one sort of conversation, were lost upon one insensible to the charms of unadulterated na-

ture, from his having so long been a captive to the enchantment of art. An enchantment he had not it seems the power to break. For La Pompadour's favor so far from suffering any decline, seemed to gather fresh strength from an incident, in respect to which, one less sure of her ascendant than she was, could scarce have even acted the coolness and unconcern that she did. The king behaved all the while to her as if he thought himself obliged to make her reparation for an injury ; and it is credibly averred that from a delicacy, to which she certainly had very little title, he avoided making her any confidence of his new engagement, whilst it lasted, lest that confidence should have the air of an insult. At least, and what was nearly the same

thing, the public never knew that he communicated it to her.

He continued however, for some months, his visits to the young Murphy, who was kept in such sequestration that very few indeed of the ladies of the Court, had admittance to her. And even those few, so dangerous are all court-connexions, she could not see with impunity, as may be observed by the following instance, in which the King gave so shining a proof of his superior attachment to La Pompadour.

In one of his hours of dalliance with his new mistress, and in the consequent spirit of familiarity, so natural on such an intimacy, she asked him archly, “ how
“ matters stood between him and his old

“woman.” The King enraged at these words, which he knew could not be the child’s own, frowned, bit his lips, and looking sternly at her, commanded her to tell him who it was that had set her on to talk to him in that strain. The poor girl frightened out of her wits at the air she saw him put on, threw herself at his feet, and without hesitation gave up the person who had tutored her to that effect.

It was the Marshallefs d’Etrées. This lady had long lived on the terms of the most unreserved familiarity and confidence with La Pompadour. But female friendships, especially at a Court, were never of a very durable nature. Certain points of pique and passion had for some time dis-united them. The Marshallefs, who had culti-

vated an acquaintance with the young Murphy, originally perhaps only out of compliment to the king, began to think of turning it to the account of her animosity against La Pompadour. In this view, to place her in a ridiculous point of light to the King, and the stronger for that natural air of truth in the mouth of a child, she suggested to the girl those words, which she repeated in the innocence of her heart, and all unaware of the consequences of this pernicious counsel. One and the first of them was, that the King incensed beyond measure, immediately banished Madam d'Etrées to her estate in the country.

As to the young Murphy, he had probably too much justice, not to make due allowance for the simplicity of her age,

and inexperience having been, instrumentally to another's designs, betrayed into giving him the offence he had taken. But as her merely personal beauty, and the enjoyment of it now palled by repetition, were as nothing in the ballance against the habitual passion and taste he had retained for La Pompadour; if this incident was not the occasion, it was at least the epoch of his resolution to part with her; a resolution that was hastened by the circumstance of her being with child by him. This will indeed sound strange to such as may not know his dislike of having natural children, that should take name and rank from that claim of birth. This aversion was founded on what he knew of the troubles which, in his minority, had been excited on occasion of the pretensions of the

natural sons of Lewis the fourteenth. In the view of preventing the like, and of dis-embarassing himself of a mistress grown indifferent to him, he procured a husband for her who though a man of quality, was uneasy enough in his fortune, to overlook the slur of such an alliance, in consideration of the great advantages it brought with it; an ample settlement on the wife and the child with which she was pregnant, and to which he was to pass for the father, and the future interest he might reasonably presume from that circumstance. One of the conditions of the match was, it seems, that he should keep her in the country and not suffer her to come near the Court. This, if they were capable of making just estimates of things, was but a favor the more.

Thus ended the adventure of the fair Murphy. But La Pompadour not content with the triumph afforded her in the issue of it, over the Marshallefs de'Etrées, involved in her projects of revenge, the Marshal d'Etrées her husband, and incontestably one of the greatest generals of France. In the bottom of her heart she detested the Marshal Richelieu, not only from being sensible that he did himself the honor of most perfectly despising her, but for his being a kind of associate with her in the King's favor, from his competition with her in schemes for amusing him. The consideration however of the superior service or mischief they were capable of doing one another, engaged them to preserve fair appearances of mutual regard, and even of friendship

between them. There had existed for some time this league of interests, and now the hatred on one side, and the jealousy of profession on the other, of both which the marshal d'Etrées was the object, became another center of union to them. The consequence of which, so probably, was the recall of the marshal d'Etrés, when in full career of victory and its consequences, and the substitution of Richelieu, who lost all the ground that the other had won. It has been said, that La Pompadour, received collaterally another retribution from this last general, in gratitude for his promotion; a retribution at least as agreeable to her passion of avarice, as the other point was to her vindictiveness. That was, in his connivence at the traffic she made of her in-

fluence in the naming forrage-contracters, super-intendants of the hospitals, victual-
lers, and other jobs for the army, which
were constantly given, not to those the
fittest for the service, but to those who gave
her the most money.

The following scene is currently attri-
buted to d'Etrées, after his return to court,
on quitting the command of the army in
Germany. The king could not well refuse
to so much merit, a gracious reception.
He intimated however to him, that he should
take it well if he would see La Pompadour.
The marshal complied, and waited on her.
She had set her face on the occasion, to all
the air of graciousness and falsity she could
command. He made her a respectful bow,

and the following speech. “ I come,
“ madam, by the king my master’s com-
“ mand, to pay you my respects. I know
“ perfectly well, the nature of your senti-
“ ments towards me ; but I rely too much
“ on the king’s justice to be afraid of them.”
With these words which he left her to digest
as she might, he withdrew, without wait-
ing for her answer.

But, besides the sacrifice of so able a
general, in so critical a conjuncture, to a
mistress, and that mistress a La Pompadour,
she also enjoyed that of one of the head-
ministers of the kingdom. This was mon-
sieur d’Argenson, secretary of state.

When that execrable attempt was made on the king's life by Damiens, who could not be too severely punished, if he committed it in his senses, nor, in all humanity and even justice, too much pitied nor too readily pardoned, if it was merely owing to the deep misfortune of his wanting them ; the wound he had given was, at the first, imagined to be much more dangerous than it happily was. The king's death was expected by the whole court, and by himself. It is easy to conceive what emotions such an accident must excite. As it was natural to think that La Pompadour would, on this occasion, not fail of flying to express her concern for his Majesty ; there was a powerful party formed to forbid her the presence. The bishop who

attended the king, urged it as matter of conscience. D'Argenson indulged his private sentiments in strongly seconding him. La Pompadour in course presents herself at the chamber-door, and has the mortification to have it shut in her face. It was a great pity. The courtiers lost, by this repulse, one of the most compleatly theatrical scenes that ever could be acted. Imagination with all its powers in the picturesque strain, can hardly form to itself any thing so high as the reality, had it been admitted, would probably have subscribed. The tragic tone, the attempt at dignity in distress, the tender terrors, the grief too mighty for utterance or only vented in broken exclamations, were all a rich diversion of which the court was by this means cruelly

deprived. She herself being bitterly disappointed of the display of those airs, was forced to swallow the affront thus publicly put upon her, though with a stomach, it may be imagined, very little disposed to digest it.

As the danger of the wound had however been rather measured by the importance of the person, than by its reality, all alarm for its being fatal ceased the very next day ; and in two or three more, the king thoroughly recovered, saw company, and resumed his usual system of life. One of his first visits was to la Pompadour, who received him all in tears, with a countenance aptly composed for the impression she had meditated. To her compliments on his re-

covery, succeeded the most pathetic expostulation with him, for the treatment she had met with. She concluded with observing to him, “ That since she found she was to
“ be debarred from personal attendance on
“ him, when it was most her duty to pay
“ it, and himself must most need it, it was
“ better for her to withdraw in time, and
“ deprive her enemies of the malignant
“ joy of offering her such another indignity.”

This threat of withdrawing, rarely made by women in her situation, but when they are sure of not being taken at their word, or who would so often be miserably bit if they were, had its full effect on the king. Determined to give her all the satisfac-

tion she could require, and much more than she ought to have required; he banished from court the scrupulous bishop, and three or four more of the courtiers, who had most distinguished themselves in opposing her entrance. D'Argenson, he dismissed from his employments, without any mitigation of his disgrace. For the continuing his nephew in place was not any, since the young marquise de Paulmy d'Argenson, he was satisfied, observed another sort of conduct towards la Pompadour, than the uncle, who had long made open profession of detesting her; sentiments which she most cordially returned, and did not slip this opportunity of gratifying.

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Paulmy d'Argenson, did not hold his posts long after his uncle. He has been lately (this year, 1758) driven out of power by the force of conjunctures, on his having served la Pompadour, but too effectually in her schemes against the marshal d'Etrées. Her favor however, could not save him. So true it is, than when once affairs are put on so irregular a footing, as such a woman's whim, every thing becomes precarious. Thwarting her brings disgrace; humoring her does the same, from the consequences being thrown not upon her, but on him who humors her. This last was the young d'Argenson's case, who together with Rouillé, another minister, having, in compliance to la Pompadour, aided and abetted the Maillebois in their combinations against marshal

d'Etrées ; were, on his clearing himself so nobly as he did, forced to be sacrificed to that just clamor and resentment of the public, with which even despotism itself is sometimes obliged to temporize, and keep measures.

But, what occasioned the most surprize was, monsieur de Machault, Keeper of the Seals, going out of power at the same time, and I think, the same day, as the elder D'Argenson. For Machault was at the head of a party directly opposite to him, and was known to be devoted to la Pompadour. It is true, that he had represented with some warmth, against the excessive expences of the king, especially in his *petits-soupers*, in what are called the *pleasure-apartments*. For as to the charges of the *grand*

convict, or public meals, they cannot exceed, being regulated by a standing order. So frivolous a pretext however, for his dismissal, as that of the King and la Pompadour, or la Pompadour and the King's having taken offence at the liberty of his remonstrances on this occasion, could hardly have been received at all, if it had not been given out with an air of mystery and acquaintance with the secrets of the court.

But those accustomed to penetrate deeper than the surface of things, particularly with respect to courts, fancied they saw, in this so apparently inconsistent a co-incidence of disgraces, the continuance and even the proof of a policy constantly attributed to la Pompadour. Perhaps their conjecture is

over-refined. If so, those who know better, will have a right to laugh at and explode it. The ground of it is however, so curious, and paints so strongly part of the French character, that, let the inferences be true or false as to la-Pompadour, it cannot be suppressed to so much advantage as stated.

There can be few, who have not heard of the differences between the clergy and the parliament of Paris. But it may not be perhaps so universally understood, that the matter of dispute is frivolous beyond imagination ; beyond even what one could ever suspect the French themselves, with all their turn for trifling, of treating seriously. Swift's celebrated controversy between the Big-

endians and the Little-endians, in Lilliput, turned upon a point, literally speaking of incomparably more importance. The ascertainment whether an egg had better be broke at the great or small end is, after all, of some little utility to mankind, and falls at least within the senses. But those points of religious metaphysics, broached at first by one Janfenius, and since his death made the foundation of a spiritual and even temporal schism in France, besides their perfect insignificance and even exquisite ridiculousness, are by their very nature eternally undeterminable by all human judgment. He who gave birth to them, the clergy that opposed them, the parliament that favored them, must have been, are, and must for ever be, all equally and necessarily in a pro-

found ignorance of the right of either side of the question, which even when decided, would not contribute the value of a pin's point to the quiet and happiness of mankind, they are in the mean time suffered to disturb. The parliament indeed, seems to have much the advantage in point of justice, since its activity has been employed to relieve the people from the tyranny of the clergy, obstinately bent on cramming the bull *Unigenitus* down their throats. But even that activity, laudable as it stands in its motives, might perhaps have been better employed if instead of taking for its object, those certificates of Anti-jansenism, exacted from dying persons; a tyranny that from its extream absurdity and senselessness must soon have ceased of itself; the parliament had exerted

itself against the court's overwhelming the subject with accumulated taxes and intolerable imposts, and not have lost sight of a substance, to run a shadow-hunting.

In the actual state of things, it was natural for both parties to look up to the king, as capable of giving a great weight to which ever side he should choose, even though the clergy does not acknowledge him for its judge. That prerogative of judging is, it seems specially reserved for some little dirty Italian priest, who from his being canonically superannuated enough to be exalted to the papal chair, is consequently ofteneft a dotard. Now, imagine, who can, so exquisite a jest, as that of a silly old man's fulminating from that mock-

altitude, his claim to infallibility, the sovereign attribute of God! A claim that with many others scarce less impudently mad, are only fit to be dated from Bedlam, and can pass but on such as are duly qualified for an hospital of ideots.

But still much depended on the king's declaring himself; and since so much did depend upon it, it may reasonably be supposed, that he was not a little embarrassed about the part he should take.

If he should suffer the clergy to depress the parliament, there was to be feared, that dropping its idle object of contention, the parliament would, if but out of resentment, recur to a much more proper and important

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consideration, the expediency of lightening the burthen of the people devoured by taxes and exactions. That parliament has not, it is true, the authority, the dignity, nor the weight of the British one, but still the very name of parliament carries with it, even in that country, where the privileges of it are so miserably abridged, something in the sound of it, favorable to the subject. The verification of the burfal edicts issued by the court, which is held a necessary form, though but a form, and the right of remonstrance still continued to the parliament, are circumstances that joined to its credit with the people, do not suffer its sentiments to be entirely insignificant.

If on, the other hand, the king by too signal a partiality, should give way to the Parliament's reducing the Clergy to order, he would have to apprehend the disaffection and even revolt of that formidable body. The influence of it is well known over the mass of the people, which though it might be instinctively averse to the Clergy's triumphing over the Parliament, would not be the less apt on any appearance of its being persecuted to take fire from its incendiaries and break out into a general blaze. "Religion is in danger," would be the alarming cry, and what is reason opposed to the fury of excited superstition?

Besides that as the King's great object was to get money from both sides, clergy, and laity, the too much disobliging of either might, in the consequences, weaken his own power over both.

Evident as this dilemma was, he was, in course under great perplexity how to act. It was reserved for the superior subtlety and artifice of La Pompadour to relieve him from it. At least she has the credit of it. Her counsel was that, the position of things considered, the King should by temporizing with both parties suffer neither to preponderate, but occasionally throw the weight of his influence into the light scale. That in the mean time he should take care to leave them, their

bone of jansenism to groud over at one another, and amuse themselves with it.

This last clause of the advice was calculated to make any stroke of authority that the King should occasionally interpose, pass currently for belonging to the bottom of the dispute itself, if, in such a chimera, it can be said to have a bottom. The effect proposed, as unsequential as it was to the general knowledge, not only of its being a mere amusement, but of the motives of the court for keeping it up, did not the less ensue. The wonder would have been, if it had not, to those who know the nature of party-rage to be the same every where, always the more tenacious of its object in proportion to the triflingness of

it, to which it so often has not the excuse of being blind, or of not being sensible of the existence of infinitely more important calls for attention, which are ruinously neglected for it.

That La Pompadour was the authoress of this policy of a neutrality, there is great reason to believe: but that the spirit of it was pursued is certain. On one side, the Parliament, on the other, the Archbishop of Paris, exiled in their turns, with many other incidents of the like nature, in the course of the contest, plainly prove, that the King adopted, in practice, this trimming plan. But nothing made it more clear, nor the share of La Pompadour in it more suspected than the dis-

mission of her favorite Machault, precisely at the time that d'Argenson was sacrificed to her. D'Argenson, as has been observed, was held to be the head of the Clergy's party, Machault that of the Parliament's. That the Clergy should not take too much umbrage at the disgrace of its champion; the King still proceeding in the character he had chosen of ballance-master, might think himself, by way of compromise, and to quiet suspicions, obliged to part with a minister obnoxious to that body on account of his favoring the cause of the Parliament. Not that this dismissal would probably have taken place, without La Pompadour's consent; but she made, it seems, no scruple of sacrificing a friend, rather than lose her revenge on an enemy: since one could not

be done without the other, or, at least, without too much violating that political system of neutrality, she is supposed to have herself suggested.

The difference however of the treatment of these ministers manifested clearly enough the difference of the motives on which they were displaced. D'Argenson had his post drily, and without any softening circumstance taken from him, yet fell very little pitied; besides his being of a stiff, austere character, as he was both in speculation and practice, a great zealot for despotism, the people in general were not much displeased that he should feel a stroke of it, even though he was known to hate La Pompadour. Machault had a large

pension, and, as they term it, all the honors of war granted him. Being much the honefter man of the too, he was the more regretted, and his appearance on the popular fide, that of the Parliament, atoned in fome meafure for his complaisances to the King's miftrefs.

In the mean time, the confequence to La Pompadour of her being imagined to have given the king this advice, with refpect to the two Parties, was, what it was natural to expect it would be, the detestation of both. Both felt that, by this means, they were made the tools of her ambition, without her having, beyond that, any the leaft concern or regard for either. But even the neutrals and well-wifhers, in ge-

neral, to their King and country, did not extremely admire the plan itself. They found in it more of the female cunning than of manly prudence. They allowed it was well enough calculated to serve a present purpose of fleecing the people, with more facility to the court, but thought it a dangerous palliation, which not curing the evil, left it to gather more force, with time, in its inward fermentation. It appeared besides a kind of prostitution of the sovereign power to pecuniary views, the delaying to restore authoritatively a peace that could not too soon have been procured between the contending parties, if the tranquillity of the subjects had been as dear to the king as their money. It was, in fact, a kind of craft not much superior, in point

of dignity, to a petty-fogger's nursing a litigation for the sake of his gain by it.

By this time, all ranks, all classes of the people concurred in one point, the hatred of La Pompadour. The Parisians especially could not forbear giving her the most public marks of it. Whenever she came to Paris, crowds followed her coach, hooting and showering upon her invectives and maledictions. This proceeded at length to such an intolerable height, that it is credibly said that, for some years, she has not dared to go thither, unless perhaps incognito.

Neither is she more beloved throughout the kingdom. The nation, in general,

holds her in the utmost abhorrence, for which many reasons are given.

The people are rarely favorable to Kings mistresses. They look upon the King as so highly born to the dignity of good example, that they never take well his setting too flagrantly a bad one ; but even then, their animosity falls chiefly on the person who is the cause of the disorder. They hardly expect or even wish him not to be gallant, but they require his being decent. Otherwise he is considered as standing charged not only with his own guilt, but with all that is produced by the imitation of him which is never but an extensive one.

But, with regard particularly to La Pompadour, there existed several aggravating circumstances ; the lowness of her original, and her being a wife forcibly and arbitrarily taken away from her husband, and kept in defiance of his right ; a right ever accounted sacred. His compelled or mercenary acquiescence afterwards rectified nothing : it only proved the oppression of despotism or his meanness. It is not however improbable that many a one exclaimed against this procedure of the King's, that was only sorry at heart, for its not being his own wife that was taken away so.

It was also generally resented that whilst the Queen and the daughters of France

were barely allowed for expences suitable to their rank, La Pompadour, with her family, should be wallowing in immense riches, and have all the royal favors, and treasures of the kingdom at her disposal.

It could not be very pleasing besides to that nation, to see the great and ablest ministers of state and generals of armies either degraded into a servile precarious dependence on a low obscure woman, so unaccountably lifted up, and who was constantly giving marks of her miserably mistaking the artifice by which she governed the king for a capacity of governing the kingdom ; or else shame-

fully sacrificed to her little passions of vanity or revenge.

Nor was it amongst the least of her reproaches, that prodigious venality of offices she had introduced wholly to her own profit, and to the apparent ruin of the interests of the nation, which could not but be ill - served by persons, who having bought their employs, thought of nothing but how to make the most of their bargains. France itself seemed to be put up by her at auction to the best bidder.

There is one popular charge indeed, against her, which from its absurdity would scarcely bear repetition, if in a fortune like her's, and in these times, when truth seems

to have taken up her abode, in the antipodes to probability, any thing could be absolutely pronounced incredible.

It has been said that she was treating with the King of Prussia for the purchase from him of the sovereignty of Neuchatel, a province of Switzerland, nay that the treaty was consummated, with reserve to declare it, in proper time, and that the money was actually paid, though at a time that France was at war with him, which would be a species of treason. This may then well be said to want proof. The motive assigned for this transaction is, that La Pompadour sensible of all the odium she has incurred, and the danger to her on the King's de-

mise, of falling a prey to her powerful and numerous enemies, might providently have in view to secure herself in time such a retreat.

Her scheme would be, on the first serious alarm for the King's life, to get into a post-chaise and make the best of her way to her own dominions, Who knows too, if there, is any truth, as most probably there is not a tittle of it in all this allegation, but that as she has no children nor likely to have any, she might give herself the air, in imitation of the Roman Flora, of bequeathing, at her death, this acquisition to the crown of France?

Yet plain though it stands from facts that admit no dubious interpretation, that ambition, vanity, insolence and artifice essentially constitute her character, it must not be thought that some virtues or appearances of virtues do not sparkle from amidst all this rubbish. It would be vain to imagine that she could do all the execution she has done without the assistance of some merit, some good qualities to interceed for her bad ones, to gloss them over, and even contribute to their effect.

It does not in the first place appear that with all the world's keenness for discovering matter of imputation to her, she ever gave it room to tax her with any of those

gross gallantries, to the suspicion of which the very sound of king's mistress commonly leads, and with which this her history will probably have been expected to be enlivened. But truth brings with it a pleasure too superior not to compensate that disappointment. Excepting her false step with the king, there lies no reproach against her for want of virtue. Yet is she not for this held a jot the more estimable. It may serve her indeed for matter of parade to her royal keeper; but by the rest of the world, that same chastity of her's, is even less attributed to a constitutional insensibility, and the more and more damping effect of her growing disorder, than to her being too thoroughly engrossed by the purely selfish passions to be susceptible

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ble of that of love, or even of that turn for gallantry, which so often passing for love, takes his name in vain; and for which, nature the powerful parent of both, has so much more to say, than for those vices, which possess her to their exclusion. She would be thought more pardonable, if she had had the plea of loving the king, but he is the only one perhaps on the face of the earth, that does her the honor of believing her capable of it, or indeed of love for any one but herself.

It has been before observed, that she has all the accomplishments imaginable, all the talents for pleasing. Happy enough not to be born without wit, and even a large share of it, she has greatly culti-

vated it, and what is more, she loves, or affects to love it in others. Nor withall her meannesses has she that so abject, so compleatly despicable, and so very common an one, of the mock-mecenasses of the times, who, by way of a good air, pretend to esteem it, without being tempted to encourage it; and even when some scanty benefit comes hard-plucked from their vanity, or drops a windfall of their whim or humor, it is generally accompanied with so mean and insolent a display of superiority, as to be rather an insult, than an obligation. Sensible that many valuable ends were to be answered, if in no more than improving and refining her own understanding, by her conversation with those of distinction for genius

and literature, to say nothing of that pleasure to be found in it, so superior to thousands of the more fashionable ones, she has caressed, patronized, and essentially served many who had those titles.

The king himself never passed for having much relish for men of letters, and indeed the general silence of them on that head, forms a kind of tacit condemnation. It proves at least, that his neglect of them has deserved their contempt; for true wit never was ungrateful. It is, on the contrary, too subject too run into the other extream, as stands attested by all the over-strain of adulation paid to Augustus, and Lewis the fourteenth.

It was then but the greater merit in la Pompadour, to force the king in this his retrenchment of apathy to wit and literary merit. Not always to make a blameable use of her influence over him, she procured a pension of six thousand livres, or about three hundred pounds a year for Crebillon the elder. Another she obtained for mademoiselle de Luffan, an ingenious authoress. She countenanced and promoted the interest of Martmontel. With Voltaire she ever kept on fair terms. Her treatment of the abbot le Blanc, chiefly known here by his letters on the English nation, of which it is plain he knew so little, is not quite so clear. She had prevailed on him to go as a kind of Mentor to her brother the

marquess de Marigny, in his travels to Italy, whose brutality soon occasioning a disagreement between them, they returned not over-pleased with one another. The sister, too much the sister, took care that the abbot, in lieu of the great favors she had made him expect, should meet with nothing but rebuffs to his pretensions. At length, she put him off, with what might be rather deemed a refinement of insult, than a mark of regard; the place of historiographer to that same illustrious brother of her's, in his department of super-intendance of the Buildings, a place than which there can hardly be imagined a lower one, except indeed, that of historiographer to herself; the reproach of which nothing could well obviate, but

the consideration of the lowness of the subject, being compensated by the greatness and importance of its connexions.

Still, she cannot but deserve some commendation for her benefactions in general to men of wit and letters, let her motive be what it will. The liberalities with which she inspired the king, were a merit both to her and himself, in whose station of royalty, they were but a duty of which the reminding him was, in fact, right loyal service. The greatest part of the honor of them indeed, as but right is, redounds to herself, from whose influence it is pretty universally conceived they are derived, there being no great reason to imagine they would come into existence

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out of his own special grace and mere motion.

Nor does she withall neglect the patronage of the other liberal arts ; music, painting, sculpture, and architecture. The putting indeed that tasteless brother of hers at the head of them, in quality of superintendant, has at the first an untoward aspect ; but, as if she was conscious of his defects, and of the justice of supplementing them, she herself in some manner officiates the post for him. All applications are made to her by all the artists in these several branches, and there is no eminent one she does not distinguish and encourage. She not only visits herself in person, the work-places of those employed

in the mechanic arts, but brings the king with her, to whom she points out and recommends their respective merit. For some she has obtained pensions, lodgings in the Louvre, and other advantages and distinctions. The tapestries of the Gobelins and the carpet-works of the Savonnerie have felt her beneficial influence. Neither does she fail of making a due parade of all these laudable attentions, serving as they must to place her in a respectable point of light to the king, who cannot but see the fitness of them, and withall their tendency to do himself honor. They are even of service to the nation itself, from the known effect and power of the royal cherishment to raise great artists in their various professions, and especially in

those which have for their object, either those public decorations that illustrate a country, and draw a profitable resort of foreigners to it; or those articles of which the prevalence of luxury, having made a kind of necessities of life, they would, if not to be found at home, be sought for abroad, to the detrimental extraction of specie from the kingdom.

But she was not, it seems reserved for an exemption from the great and general rule, that no perfectly true taste can exist where there is a want of elevation of sentiments, or of that superior dignity of mind which it does not appear, that she had ever the honor of knowing. She could not help falling into the current of the na-

tional passion of the French for baubles and false refinements of taste. If the liberal and solid arts were countenanced by her, she did not the less favor those frivolous ones, that are in the pay of effeminate nicety or vain curiosity. Studied ornaments of dress, new inventions of fashions toys, trinkets, change of apartments for every season, quaint devices in furniture, in short, all the precious trifling of fanciful luxury, seemed to divide her favor with the nobler objects of talents and genius, much in the style of a woman sharing her smiles so equally between a man of sense and a fop, that it is hard to say which is preferred; though the world rarely disposed to the most favorable side of a doubt, generally suspects, from those two cha-

acters being naturally not made for a competition, her rather inclining inwardly to the worst, and that her outward regard for the other, serves her only for a cover, or as a kind of saving composition for her reputation of taste.

It has been said, that la Pompadour has an exquisite taste; but as that has been observed to be incompatible with any littlenesses of mind, falsity of the heart or affectation of mis-becoming points of distinction, there would perhaps be greater propriety of expression, in saying, that she had an uncommon fancy. Many proofs of it might be given, but one may suffice.

On a visit the King made her at Bellevue, that beautiful seat he had caused to be built for her, at so lavish an expence, that no invention was wanting to art, nor no art to luxury; la Pompadour who was prepared for his reception, led him into an apartment, of which, at one end, folding-doors opened into a parterre on a level with it. It was the depth of Winter, and the first thing that met his sight, was a garden, composed of ranges of flower-vases, the contents of which were in full blow, in all the liveliest colors of the spring, whilst at the same instant, his smell was struck with a diffusion from them, of their sweetest natural odors. This could not however be but a momentary illusion, since the flowers were no other

than artificial ones of porcelain, in the closest imitation of nature, and the scent they exhaled, proceeded from their being strongly impregnated, every flower, with its peculiar essence.

This deception appeared indeed ingenious to the king ; but it gave the courtiers room for a remark, that there could be nothing, in or out of nature, into which she had not the secret of breathing superiorly the spirit of artifice. This notion generally prevailing, not however without her having given full-sufficient cause for it, made all her actions suspected of it, and none so much as the most plausible ones. Even the tribute of grief, she occasionally, and it might be unaffectedly paid to the

feelings of nature, so far from being allowed to do her the honor it deserved to do her, if it was but for her attention to save the appearances of duty and humanity, was construed into an artfull abuse of them, to the purposes of falsity and pretence.

When Monsieur Le Normant de Tournéan who in the character of her presumptive father, had taken so much care of her education, was struck with the apoplexy of which he died, long after she was in favor with the King ; on the first news of his danger, she flew to Estiolles, a seat and estate from which her husband Normant his nephew takes that addition to his name, by which he

is most commonly known. She saw the uncle, who was then there, but insensible and past recovery. The violent signs she gave of affliction were most probably, or at least for the greatest part, real and unaffected. It would have been too brutal an insensibility, too enormous an ingratitude not to have felt for the loss of one who, in the accomplishments he had given her, had laid the foundation of what she esteems her good fortune, unenviable as it is. She staid fifteen days at this place, digesting her grief, having had the precaution to have d'Estiolles acquainted with her journey, that he might not meet her there.

It ought not also to pass unnoted that she ever kept great measures with Paris

de Montmartel, who had been joint-keeper of her mother with Le Normant de Tournéan. She might not care for attacking, in him, a man she could not be very sure was not her own father. Besides the great chance of his being so, the air of her face very much resembles his. At present he passes for her first minister.

As to d'Estiolles that so cruelly deserted husband of her's, who in marrying her, in the teeth of so many objections had made her first and her best fortune ; her conduct to him on his return to Paris from Avignon where he had been exiled and at the point of death for her sake, greatly manifested the mixture of lights

and shades that enter into the picture of her, in which however the latter so strongly predominate. She showed indeed at a distance, some remains of regard for him, but all the marks she gave him of it, were so palpably adulterated with vanity, and particularly with that artifice which constitutes her specific distinction of character, that the greatest merit of them was lost from the imperfection of the stamp of the heart on them. Even her most plausible acts of reparation to him, appeared to have their origin more from her silly pride of King's mistress, than from tenderness for an injured husband; of whom too in the midst of all her present ramparts of greatness, she could not have but some dread; for guilt

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is never but cowardly. But whatever was their motive, they were sure all of them, to carry with them a dash of trick and contrivance even where the nature of them did not seem to require any, just as there are some who lie constitutionally, in indifferent matters, purely for lying sake; and indeed, what artifice can there be that is not strictly resolvable into a lie in action, or in words?

He had, as has before been observed, fallen into a libertine course of life, and kept a number of low women. La Pompadour taking the scandal of this to herself, as she well might, since she was the occasion of it, imagined the remedy would be to provide him a mistress in form; a

mistress of a certain rank and character to attach him to her and take him off the Common. In this view she got underhand recommended to him a creature or at least a dependent of her own, one Madam de la Mothe the widow of an officer of the Cavalry. He was caught with the lure thrown out to him, engaged with her, and had a child, a daughter, by her. But poor d'Estiolles was not, it seems, born to be more happy in a mistress than in a wife. He soon discovered not only that she was guilty of infidelities to him, but that she was a kind of spy upon all his actions, which were immediately carried by her to his wife, in whom he could not approve so over-officious a concern about them, af-

ter her so manifest a forfeiture of her right to it. He discarded then this mistress, but could not help, on his wife's positive insistence, allowing her a very considerable pension. As to the child, La Pompadour having her reasons of equity to consider it in some measure as her own, since her own it ought to have been, she provided for it in a manner that strongly characterizes that vein of artifice which runs through her whole conduct.

It must be first observed that the laws and customs in France being in many points unfavorable to illegitimate children, this one of d'Estiolles must have been consequently involved in the general disadvantage, both as to the stain of birth,

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and even in matters of interest. To obviate this inconvenience La Pompadour took measures for a gentleman being found for her, one of the clearest nobility, unmarried and poor. The search had not been either long or difficult ; such an one was presently brought to an agent of hers, whose first question to him was, whether a hundred thousand crowns (twelve thousand five hundred pounds) would be of service to him. His answer was conformable to his circumstances. He was then informed of the condition on which this sum would be given him, which was precisely as follows. He was to choose any wife for himself, that he should like best, provided she was his equal in birth, to be married in the face

of the church, and in which ceremony was to be included the bridegroom and bride's passing the child of d'Estiolles under the canopy held over them during the service, for their own as if begotten between them before marriage.

This form, it seems, is allowed a full legitimation to all intents and purposes of any children, belonging to both parties, though born to them out of wedlock. It has been sometimes seen that three, four, or more, and some full grown have stood under the canopy that covered them with their father and mother, whilst the nuptial ritual was reading, upon which they become instantly vested with all the rights of the

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most lawfull issue. But then it is held a fraud, if the children thus covered are not truly and properly those of the parties who thus own them, or by them believed to be so of which they are required to make a solemn declaration in the face of God and the People.

The greatness however of the proffered sum removed all scruples ; the condition was accepted, executed and the child of d'Estiolles thus covered, entered at once into possession of all the honors and privileges of lawfull and noble birth. She bears the name of the family into which she is thus admitted, and La Pompadour, by her interest, took care

that she should not want the benefit of her qualification.

She procured her sence to be chosen one of the canoneſſes of Remiremont, to be received, amongſt whom, it is neceſſary to make proof of a clear and antient nobility on both ſides of deſcent from father and mother. They are taken in at any age, and ſubject to the regularity of a convent-life, though without re-nouncing their temporal eſtate, or taking any vows, ſo that they may, marry when they pleaſe.

As this girl is the only child d' Eſtiolles is at leaſt known now to have, it is reaſonably imagined ſhe will inhe-

rit all he can possibly leave her, which alone would make her one of the most considerable fortunes in France.

Many laughed, and more were scandalized at an abuse of a church-ceremony, that was even a kind of forgery, but all discovered the finger of a La Pompadour in this piece of management. Another instance of that her constantly mixing contrivance and design in every thing she does, offers itself in the following transaction of hers, with respect to her husband.

D'Estiolles, was lodged, together with his sister, Madam de Baschi, at the Hôtel of la Valiere, in hired apartments.

La Pompadour's vanity was hurt by his not having a house of his own, and as she was at the same time desirous that on his getting one, it should be answerable to the high idea of dignity and importance she had annexed to his being the husband of his Majesty's mistress; she was not a little embarrassed how to prevail on him to purchase such an one.

D'Estiolles, though a lover of pleasures, was far from liberal even in them, but in all other points he was rather avaritious. She could not expect that he would readily disburse so large a sum as the acquisition of a fine house would require. She could indeed have advanced

it herself, and not impossibly, would have made that sacrifice of her interestedness to her vanity, but that the happy turn of her head for art suggested to her a contrivance to carry the point without expence to herself.

There was one Monsieur Bouret, an officer in the revenue, a creature of and dependent on Monsieur Machault, consequently attached to La Pompadour, and who from beginnings moderate enough, had got a very large fortune. He was besides a man of wit and pleasure. He had built one of the noblest houses in Paris, and furnished it in a style of the greatest magnificence. One drawing-room alone had cost him above

eight thousand pounds : every thing in it to the very wainscoting and window-shutters, being what they call *vieux lacq* or old japan. Another article certainly of more expence than taste, was a large closet lined throughout with fine looking-glass, sides, floor, ceiling, and doors. All the joints were hid by festoons of roses and garlands of flowers, painted on the glass, by the best hands of Paris. This may suffice to give an idea of the value of the house, in which every thing was in proportion.

Bouret, who knew that La Pompadour passionately wished her husband in a house of that figure, made her a tender of it, which she gladly accepted,

and concerted with him the following scheme for surprizing d'Estiolles into the acceptance of the offer that was to be made him of it.

One evening that Bouret was at supper with d'Estiolles, at his sister Madam de Baschi's, with other ladies, he took occasion to make the conversation fall on the inconvenience of hired lodgings, and offered to d'Estiolles, to sell him that fine house of his above-mentioned, with all the furniture standing. His answer was, that he would not possibly afford so much money as it was natural to think he could ask for it. After a great many motives of persuasion, in which Bouret chiefly insisted on the

cheapness of the bargain it should be to him; to all which d'Estiolles continued inflexible in the notion it could never come to so little as he was willing to give; Bouret at length staggered his resolution, by proposing to refer the peremptory naming of the sum to d'Estiolles his own mistress, Madam de la Mothe, then present. This d'Estiolles could not but think very favorable to him. There were two things that probably he did not, at that time, know, the one that Bouret was violently suspected of being on the most intimate terms with that faithful mistress of his; the other, that she had her cue from him.

Between jest and earnest however, he consented, that de la Mothe should fix the price, which she accordingly did, as had been pre-concerted between her and Bouret, at a hundred thousand livres, somewhat less than five thousand pounds, though the house and furniture were richly worth a million of livres, about fifty thousand pounds sterling.

Bouret affected a surprize, as he well might; but said, since he had given his word to abide by the lady's award, he would not affront her so much as to retract it. D'Estiolles, who could scarce not smook some mystery at the bottom of this, acquiesced meanly enough in an agreement, the interest of which was so

visibly and so unconscionably on his side : the bargain was instantly ratified by a regular bill of sale to him.

But Bouret knew very well what he had been doing. In three or four days after, he received from La Pompadour a Patent for a place in the Post-Office, worth a hundred thousand livres a year.

Thus ended this farce, perhaps only memorable for its furnishing one proof of the most considerable employs in the kingdom, being the sport of that woman's vanity and whim.

Many more instances of the like nature might here be produced, if the

multiplying them unnecessarily would not look too like giving a rhapsody of the town-chat of Paris, or of stories caught from the pages or lackeys of the anti-chambers, and circulated in the public. As to the unobservance of dates, or of the order of facts, there can scarcely need an apology for it. There are few that would not even be displeased with seeing a history of this nature treated with such a gravity and dignity of exactness as if it could have any pretensions to them.

It is presumed, it will be accepted for sufficient, that scarce any of those principal historical strokes of La Pompadour's life hitherto should be omitted,

which marking the character, serve to establish a competent idea of her. As to veracity, those, it is, who, are already the best acquainted with her history that will hardly not feel what so rarely but makes itself felt, where it exists, that truth has been always the aim, even where it may have sometimes been missed or mistaken through mis-information or want of judgment. To them especially it will be evident that the measure of what may be strictly verified, greatly exceeds what may be unavoidably false, and to the candid will consequently atone for it.

But to return to the subject: Pompadour though she looks down upon her husband d'Estiolles as comparatively

a little creature honored with her concern about him, and in fact treats him with all that air of protection and superiority, yet such is the power of a husband's prerogative, that it has been penetrated that in secret she is not without anxiety for its ever coming into his power to re-claim it. Though she does not see him, out of respect to the King, she writes to him in the style of a powerfull friend afraid of an inferior, and gets for him every thing he asks or that is consistent with the measures she thinks herself obliged to keep with the royal favor. On his part, thoroughly detached from her, he speaks slightly enough of her to persons of his confidence. He knows her thoroughly, and no longer

blinded to her faults by his love, he only remembers her ingratitude and her artifices of which he could, if he would, give a pretty numerous, catalogue.

The public judging impartially between them, pronounces without hesitation, that it was only for a mind so thoroughly infected with false ambition and vanity as her's, not to see that even the success of her premeditated designs upon the king, in wrong of an indulgent husband, herself in the bosom of affluence, was a very untriumphable one; that it was rather but a wretched bargain to her; an exchange, to her irreparable damage, of the tranquillity of innocence for the disquiet of guilt, of honor for

infamy, since she was doubtless more truly respectable in the character of wife to d'Estiolles than in that of mistress to a King, whom she had not even the excuse of loving.

Certainly then, if she was not too well assured before-hand of the Kings weakness for her, it must be with the worst grace imaginable, that she could, with all her artifice, sound so high, those sacrifices to him of her gratitude, duty and fame, that must have cost her so little, since she had of herself forelaid them. Or if they were sacrifices at all, they were, at least, evidently made not to his passion, but to her own predominant ones of vanity, interest and others

of the like nature, of which Love could never be of the number, who never but disdains to be joint-tenant with them in the same heart, or even to admit them to hold under him. No! the Love that can serve them or with them, can be nothing but an impostor, and that a rank one.

On this occasion however a reflection rises too naturally here not to be pardoned the admission. Here was a wife openly torn from the arms of a husband distractedly fond of her, and kept in defiance of him; consequently his property violated in the most sacred and tender point. No redress for him but arbitrary punishment for daring to assert

his right ; no resource but that of a passive acquiescence. After this instance, and many more of the most grievous oppression might be produced from french history, must it not appear extremely pleasant to an englishman to hear the subjects of that nation denying the existence of their despotic government, when reproached with it, for a reproach they admit it to be, and what is stranger yet, naturally and with all the simplicity of self-persuasion, inveighing against despotism, without seeming to know or dream that they themselves are crouching under the compleatest form of it in the known world ? Their Courts of justice, their forms of procedure, their appearances of Laws and Magistracy are evidently all nothing

but the masks of that Arbitrary Power, the face of which they hide, only to make that Power the more secure and permanent. The bulk of the People, rarely any where penetrating beneath the surface of things, does not see, though it is sure, at times, to feel the fangs of that monster despotism lurking behind all that dazzling pomp of Order and State ; a tyranny politically mitigated, reduced, in short, into system, and only the more detestable for the being so. How much preferable is the franker, honefter barbarism of a Turkish Government ; disdaining all those refinements of artfull Policy, in which alone, the Grand-Signior at Versailles differs from the Grand-Signior in his

seraglio at Constantinople? What pity would not be due from humanity to the French if their native slavishness of heart did not sink them beneath it? Yet that the very Court which has forged for the people, those chains surely not the less chains for the nicety of their make or the glare of their polish, is in some measure sensible of their misery, may be inferred from it's constant endeavors to procure them that cruel consolation the miserable find in having numbers share their wretched fate, as if too that could lessen the shame of it.

This may at least be one of the reasons to be given for the rage, in that Court, of propagating slavery by every

art of conquest and extension of dominion, in the presumption of a readiness in other countries to receive those its chains, from its having already tried them with such success on subjects that seem born for them, are vain and fond of them, and most certainly deserve, since they can so gaily endure them. In the mean time La Pompadour continues reigning triumphant in plenitude of power, and what is more, the duration of it seems to be ensured by that very circumstance which made so many bespeak the decline of it, the cessation of all sensual commerce between the King and her. All the danger to her ascendant lay in the first moments of uncertainty what turn his sentiments

for her would take on the exclusion of that so tender a motive of attachment. But that crisis once conquered, there was more to be hoped by her than to be feared from one of his character so apt to mistake the weakness of obstinacy, itself a passion built on passions, for the virtue of firmness that is never but founded upon Reason.

She had, in the first place, now no longer to apprehend that palling effect of satiety, from which love itself when at the happiest, is not always happy enough to be exempt, nor always sure of not feeling, in a less or greater degree, those disgusts of satisfied desire, which almost appropriately fall to the

share of the Men, and constitute, with them, the usual ingratitude of enjoyment.

She is also now much more secure against his change towards her from another cause, that she had before principally to dread, and which it may not be amiss to specify somewhat at large, as much of her fortune and dependence is connected with it.

In the countries enslaved to the Roman-catholic superstition, there are two periods of life particularly liable to feel the tyranny of it.

The first, that of very tender youth indeed, when the mind, before its having gathered firmness enough, is from its softness and flexibility, apt to take the stronger impressions of what it is taught to receive as sacred truths. Some of them doubtless are so, such as the idea of a supream Being, and the pure doctrine of Religion, but these awfull certainties are abused by the sophistication of them with the most ridiculous absurdities and the grossest nonsense, which could not even pass with children, nor especially keep their hold, in the age of reason, unless for their having been originally introduced in such excellent company, of which they are taken as an essential part, and from which it therefore

becomes hard to separate them. These early youth embraces with all the fervor, the enthusiasm and unexamining simplicity of that age. Thence it is, that the convents of both sexes are peopled with those wretched victims of their own innocent credulity, of which Artifice and Design take so infamously cruel an advantage.

The other period is the decline of life, when the weakening powers of it, open nearer prospects of a future life. These bring back with redoubled force all those prejudices of childhood, in which the greatest falsities having passed promiscuously involved with the greatest truths, with no distinction but that of the principal stress being ever laid on the falsities, to

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save or damn, as believed or rejected, so many, for want of a manly strength of judgment necessary to the garbling of the truths from them, imagine it the safest to swallow all together; as what, at least, can do no harm, if it does no good. The more faith, the more merit, and down they go glib. Idle, silly notion! cause of so much perseverance in error! as if it could be entirely matter of indifference to a God, who is wisdom itself, whether he is worshipped in folly or not.

To these seasons of the mind's infirmity, sympathizing with that of the body, in the early and later stages of the human existence, may be added one not less

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productive of corporeal and mental weakness, and common to all ages of life, the accident of sickness. These seasons are the seed and harvest-times of superstition, and that this double-weakness forms her greatest strength, is not amiss proved by her choosing for her preferable object of conquest the female sex, which she emphatically affects to honor with the distinctive epithet of devout.

It may be observed, that as to the first period, that of tender youth, the station indeed of princes exposes them, in it, to the strongest efforts of superstition to get them into her power, from the prospect of greater protection and advantages, in future, of which her suc-

cess lays the foundation. But then that very station, generally speaking, defends them afterwards as they grow up, from the gloomy excesses of her seduction, she herself being at the age of strengthened reason, supplanted by the functions of state, the display of power, and the dissipations of pleasure. I have said in general, only, because I am not unaware that there have been, and perhaps are some exceptions.

As for example, that of a Prince of our days, who damps the hopes of a whole people in him, from too great an appearance of the ill effects upon him, of his having been early betrayed and delivered into the merciless hands of those poiso-

nous murderers of reason and common-sense, the Jesuits and bigots. Should their inhuman interested zeal have taken too deep a possession of him, the world may, in time, not impossibly see as declared a schism break out into action of Jansenists and Constitutionists, as was that of the Calvinists and Romanists, in the same nation, of which one would think the people formed to prove, as strongly as ever was proved in any private person, that extream Wit is not incompatible with extream Folly.

This first period, however, being entirely passed with la Pompadour's royal gallant, is entirely out of the present question.

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As to the other, into the verge of which he is precisely entering, the danger from it to her power, on the continuance of a commerce more liable to the compunctions of conscience, in proportion as the fire of youth and its passions should subside, was the most to be apprehended. Kings would be happier than other men in that superior officiousness of their spiritual guides, for the sake of the access that office gives them, to remind them of their duty, if these directors, would but honestly do theirs by them. But instead of drawing their arguments for it from that pure spring, the love of God, sole origin of all that is good and great in speculative or practical religion, from its inspiring that beneficence to society,

which carries so strongly his own divine stamp upon the heart of man, they think it more for their interest, to instill or cultivate in him the fear of the Devil.

Knowing how much greater a force fear has than hope, the chief battery they employ, is the religion of their own forgery, presented under the penalty of the torments of the heathen's purgatory, or of the eternal flames of hell. These terrors oftenest operate to their wish, which is never without some design in their own favor, and for their own interest. No wonder then that their effects should take the tincture of that slavish dastardly passion from whence they proceed, and to which the honor of being a homage to God is so falsely attributed ;

whilst, in fact, that homage is, no other than what is with infinitely more propriety paid openly by the Indian savages to the Devil.

Thence those childish superstitions, those silly outward ceremonies, those fooleries to which so great an efficacy is annexed ; thence so often, what is worse yet, those infernal persecutions of consciences for the sake of a God, whose peculiar prerogative of dominion over them is thus usurped, and who cannot but hold in the utmost abhorrence those cruelties which are the work of Weakness, practised upon by Artifice, and of Power made the tool of Superstition.

As to the hour of sickness, open for the same reason of weakness, to the same insidiousness, the king had already given a proof of his subjection to that dominion of fear, by that dismissal of la Tournelle, whom he had just created dukes of Chateau-roux, which took place during his illness at Metz, and whom, as it were to show, that the resolution of it was purely owing to the terrors then inspired by that situation, he recalled the instant that the danger was over. In vain: for he never saw her again, she dying suddenly after his message to her, of poison as was reported by some, and has been before remarked, or of over-joy, as was believed by others.

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But as to la Pompadour, she is now well over those flats. Circumstanced as she is with the King, absolved in due form for the crime of her past commerce with him, and safe in the innocence of her present one, so far as the absence of mere sensuality can make it to be innocent, she has little to fear from the representations of those directors of the royal conscience, who never let slip an occasion of exerting their spiritual authority, if but for the sake of keeping it up, and to whom all degrees of right and wrong are so equal, that they will with the same zeal, insist on banishing a King's mistress his presence, or millions of his innocent, faithful subjects his dominions. They owe besides, a particular grudge to la Pompa-

dour, for her counsel of neutrality between the clergy and parliament; but where can they take their text of objection to a woman who is entitled to her Easter-communion?

By this means, however, her power appears greatly confirmed, and it is now generally imagined, that she is projecting a yet more permanent establishment of it, by drawing the King in to a mood of mind, to which, in her continual study of his inclinations, not to say weaknesses, she could not but discover, by fits, a certain propensity. This is that very begot-devotion which in her former situation must have been fatal to her favor, and which in her present one,

she will probably have the art of converting into the instrument of its continuance. Of this design she has already given broad indications in her beginning to affect at least as much of that particular sort and air of prudery which is commonly the prelude to the hoisting of the sanctified standard of bigotry, as may not appear too violent and too suspicious an abruption from those pleasures of the world, with which he has not yet quite done diverting himself. Should she bring that scheme to bear, it is not only possible that she may get reconciled to the clergy, but very probable that her superior artifice will suggest to her methods of amusing him as effectually in that way, in which there are so many

childishnesses, as in any other, and thus give the world the second volume of Madam Maintenon and that a much duller one, if possible, than the first.

There seems then at present, and the reader will please, once for all, to take notice that this is written in the midsummer of one thousand seven hundred fifty eight, little room for conjecturing that he will soon snap his leading-strings, or that she will not long continue her ascendant, unless either some of those very measures she strains beyond all moderation to keep it, should hasten its destruction, and dissolve the enchantment, or that the conspiring clamor of his whole people should at length force

open his eyes to the injury he is doing to them and to his own honor, in abandonning himself to her mis-guidance.

The Queen, the Dauphin, the Royal family, who all detest her in proportion to their affection for him, all see with a grief the more intense for their not having the liberty to vent it, a woman so scandalously at the head of his history, constantly betraying the daughter of a Poisson's wife by the mean and silly insolence of her vanity, and the wife of a farmer of the Revenue by her gaunt eagerness after money, at the same time that no stronger proof need be required of her loving nothing in him, but his

power to gratify those passions, than those passions themselves. Once more, there is no-one who knows any thing of love, but must know how incompatible with it they are, in their very essence. Or even could there be such a thing, in nature, as mercenary love, it must, partake so much of dirt and meanness as to have, like fruits forced by putrid muck at the root, ever a dung-hill-taste.

She has not been content with draining from him an unconscionable profusion of grants and gifts, and of making the most pernicious advantages of his favor, but, though saving enough of her own, kept collaterally urging him to the most exorbitant expences, in

those pleasures and amusements she suggested to him, or to which she encouraged his natural inclination, instead of exerting her effectual influence and comptroll to restrain them, as she could not but have done if she had had a real regard for him.

She attends and presides over all those parties of pleasure in his frequent journeys to Fontainebleau, Marly, St. Germain's, Choisi, La Meute, which are not only so ruinously expensive to himself, that the Revenue of the Crown stands mortgaged or anticipated for several years in advance, but to the nobility that accompanies him. A circumstance very little minded especially

the disorder of their private fortune makes them more dependent on the court. Deep play, hunting and trifling form the whole circle of dissipation in those jaunts, and stunning all serious thought, greatly take off the attention due to the business of the state, which becomes therefore at the most a second and subordinate consideration. It was in course perfunctorily managed, and stood committed only to such ministers as La Pompadour chose or were agreeable to her. This supposes no very great dignity or elevation of mind in those who could tamely submit or acquiesce in such a tenure of their places.

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The truth is, that she had surrounded the king with those little creatures of hers, over whom she could extend her empire, even to their not daring to say any thing to him that she had not dictated to them. Thence it was that any truth that interfered with her private views could rarely penetrate to the royal ear; or, at best, could be but indirectly suggested. An instance of this last did not a little divert the court.

Not long since, the King on some occasion went to Paris, which he does very rarely, from an aversion he is supposed to have taken to it, from his knowing the disposition of that Town towards La Pompadour. The populace

gathering, followed his coach, not with the usual acclamations of *Vive le Roi!* "or long live the King!" but with loud cries of "Bread! Bread!" and this in spite of the guards who rebuffed and even threatened the People. At the same time they loaded the Queen with a thousand benedictions.

Incensed at all this, on his return, to Versailles, he mentioned it with a mixture of acrimony and concern. One of La Pompadour's creatures taking it up, said that he wondered at the people's unreasonableness; that they were wantonly crying famine over a heap of corn, for that to his knowledge the quartern-loaf was sold at some low

price that he mentioned. The honest Marquess de Souvré, the hero of the elbow-chair-story in the first part of this work, could not with any patience hear so gross an imposition, and taking up his hat and gloves, made as if he was going out in a hurry. The King calling to him asked him the reason. “ Only, “ says he, may it please your majesty, “ that I may go this instant and have “ that rogue of a steward of mine “ hanged, for his charging me double “ the price for my bread, of what that “ worthy gentleman assures it to be.” This set the whole presence a laughing, but does not seem to have set the King a thinking.

It has been shown how disgustingly disqualified La Pompadour is for being the King's mistress in one sense, and how undeserving of it in almost every other; but she still makes a worse figure, if possible, in her character of a stateswoman. Little artifices and petty passions could never make a great minister. Yet she aspired still higher and assumed all the authority of a despotic mistress, that gave what motion she pleased to the State-machine. Mean-spirited counsels naturally enough coming from her, and not the less followed for their being so; Ministers disgraced, Generals recalled at her imperious nod, and all of these for the worst, signalized her power and her want of judgment.

In the mean time, this subversion of all order and dignity threw a general languor into the administration of affairs. The subjects of the greatest rank, merit and abilities, were either driven into corners, or voluntarily shrank from the indignity of places that could only be held on the scandalous terms of paying court to a woman, constantly jealous of not having enough of that respect shown her, to which she must be conscious of having so little title, and but the more intent on hiding that meanness of her's, by an insolence so much fitter to prove and expose it. The consequence of this must be the filling of the places thus vacant with petty characters, whose greatest merit could only be the having none, as

no merit could there exist, but what must be incompatible with a submission to her, or with sub-ministring to the will and measures of a woman that visibly sacrificed to her own private passions, the King who was governed and the kingdom that was dishonored by her.

Nor did this deadly blast of all ardor, and emulation for the service of the public, but run through all orders from the highest to the lowest. Numbers of that nation in that enthusiasm of theirs for the glory of their King, which would have so much more noble a spring in the love of their country, and in the cause of their own liberty that would be included in it, would even sacrifice their lives to the hopes of obtaining the royal

favor. But even these, on supposing them any sentiments of honor, could not be but very indifferent to that favor, if only to be had through a la Pompadour. The most gracious gift, the most merited rewards must come greatly lowered in value, through so foul a channel. She can procure nothing from the king honorable to any one, but his disgrace.

It cannot however be imagined, that all this disorder and the extensively pernicious consequences of it, which will make such a figure in the history of France, should not breed a general fermentation. The public execration of her is actually risen to such a pitch of rage, that should any visitation of a plague or famine supervene, it would be current-

ly imputed to la Pompadour. There is even now no saying to what extremities the general dissatisfaction might not be carried. That something of this nature is not but apprehended, appears from her rarely stirring abroad without an escort of a hundred and fifty, or two hundred horse.

In the mean time towards suppressing the more than murmurs at the actual system of things, the court has had recourse to that most despicably wretched of all the expedients of despotism, the forbidding of all orders of the people, on penalty of the Bastile, or other imprisonment, to talk of state affairs. The coffee-houses and all the public places of

resort, swarm with the licensed spies of the government. A measure this that only drives the discontent, seeking evaporation at the mouth, with ten-fold violence back to the heart, which it lies bursting, till the first opportunity, it can snatch from the oppression of arbitrary power, of breaking out into the most furious demonstrations. But where this tyrannical edict of silence has a further meaning to conceal from the people, that ill state of things brought on by that very mis-government of which they are debarred the liberty of complaining, it has no other effect, but that for one evil, it may keep from their knowledge, but never from their doubt, it gives them room to presume a thousand.

But if the cries from within are thus stifled or attempted to be stifled, the violence of conjunctures from without, has not but at length operated some alterations favorable to the wishes of that nation. One of these is the lately calling up the marshal d'Etrées, and his father-in-law, the marquis de Puiseux, to the council, notwithstanding the known indisposition of La Pompadour to them. But in such exigencies of state, even malice and envy themselves must shrink up to the wall, to make way for merit so superior and so necessary. La Pompadour true to her usual art, submitted with as good a grace as she could, to what she saw she could not help. Possibly now the frequent expensive jour-

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neys to some of the pleasure-seats may be suspended, from the more honest representations of those ministers, seconded by the bad state of the finances. The œconomy of the royal house-hold is already undergoing an actual reform.

The urgency of the times, in short, seems at present to prevail over the turn to expensiveness so strongly suggested or cherished by la Pompadour. Besides, follies have not always the privilege of lasting. But, with her cunning, there could be no doubt of her quickly veering to the wind that blew, nor even of her anticipating the change from observing the drift of the clouds on the horizon.

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There is no point however she gives up, of which she does not make all the merit that can be made of her giving it up. She will even affectedly exaggerate her natural taste for profuseness, or at least, for promoting it, purely to make her sacrifice of it, do her the greater honor with the king whom, with an art not, it seems, the less successful for its being so stale and trite, she leads by appearing to be herself led by him. Thus with a flexibility that gains her all her ends, she adopts herself to all his moods and turns of temper, like the creeping plants that, as they climb, follow and humor the bent of the tree they wind round and prey upon.

Thence it is that hitherto there appears no abatement of her favor with him. He has had no attachments since that scarcely declared one of his to the young Murphy. Perhaps he may have had some transient gallantries, or may have returned by fits to his *grizettes*, but neither is this very certain, nor of any consequence to her.

Having brought the history of la Pompadour, down to the present instant, and necessarily leaving the rest of it to be furnished by future time and events, there now only remains for the satisfaction of the reader's curiosity, to give some description of her person. In order to this, it will hardly be thought improper to

distinguish times. The one, when in her full powers of beauty, she made a conquest of the king, about fifteen years ago, for so long she has reigned ; the other, the present one.

She might be about three and twenty, when she at length, accomplished what she had so long been laying out for, and what her mother and herself had often openly declared to be her aim, the getting to be the King's mistress. Her complexion was naturally very fair, with eyes full of fire and meaning, of which the great life they gave to her face, was not unpleasingly tempered with a certain air of languor and tenderness it received from a constitution rather inclined to

sickliness, of which the palish hue of her lips was another sign, and such an one as could not give the imagination very favorable prepossessions. Neither did she towards heightening her color, or rather towards supplying the deficiency of it, disdain the assistance of a slight tinge of artificial red, though no more than amounted to just a suspicion. Her features were all perfectly delicate ; her hair of the chefnut color, her stature of a middling size, and her shape irreproachable. Nothing, in fact, could more beautifully taper into slenderness of waist. Conscious of this, and never negligent of any art that could improve any advantage she had, she

she invented, for an undress, a gown that came into fashion under the name of *Robe-à-la Pompadour*, made somewhat in the style of a Turkish vest, buttoning at the collar and wrists, which well-adapted to the rise of the bosom, and gathering close round the waist, marks the shape, with the more grace and effect, for its appearance, at the first glance, of being rather meant to conceal it.

There was great sprightliness and vivacity diffused throughout her person, and animated her every look and gesture, perhaps in too great a degree, since it might contribute to her being remarka-

ble for a bold forward air and a way of presenting herself that ever seemed as much as to say pertly "here am I." Upon the whole however she was generally allowed to be one of the handsomest and the most agreeable women, at that time, in Paris.

At present, (one thousand seven hundred fifty eight) that she may be about thirty eight years of age, it is hard to say what her face may be under a layer inch-deep of red and white. It may be presumed she has her reasons for falling in with that fashion of the ladies of the French Court which equally concealing a bad or a good complexion, for they

almost all use it, breeds such a ridiculous sameness that there is hardly any distinguishing one face from another no more than in a flock of sheep; at the same time that the red or vermillion is so glaringly predominant, that they might be taken for so many figure-dancers masked for executing a dance of Furies. One would, in short, imagine that not satisfied with being chaste in themselves, they sought to be the cause of chastity in others, from that otherwise unaccountable rage they have of daubing themselves in so coarse and unnatural a way, as to destroy all effect of their features, and every desire in the men, but that of having nothing to say to them.

La Pompadour's face, being by this means out of the question, there remains but to observe, that besides the change easily to be imagined that years may have made in her person, her disorder has reduced her to so frightful a state of leanness, that it is but just all bodily appetite towards her should cease, since it must starve on the little substance it would find in her, being almost as dis-incumbered from flesh, as impalpable, as elusive of the embrace as one of the infernal shades, on the banks of the Stygian Lake. Combine with the idea of this painted sepulchral figure, another that is not amiss symbolized by it, that of the mask of artifice

over all her hollownes of heart, and you have pretty justly before you, in body and in spirit, amidst all the surrounding glare of greatness, wealth, and a King's favor, that object of pity and contempt, the present la Pompadour.

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